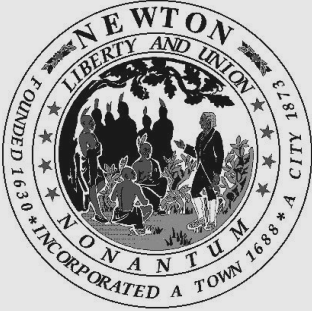

CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS

ZONING REFORM GROUP

MEETING NOTES

DATE: May 24, 2011



Setti D. Warren
Mayor

Candace Havens
Director
Planning & Development
Department

Members

Ald. Deborah Crossley, Chair
Marc Hershman
Peter Kilborn
Howard Levine
Jennifer Molinsky
Terry Morris
Jason Rosenberg
Peter Sachs
Steve Vona

Executive Summary

The Zoning Reform Scoping Group (ZRG) met on May 24, 2011. Attending were Alderman Deborah Crossley, Chairman, Howard Levine, Jason Rosenberg, Marc Hershman, Terry Morris, Steve Vona, Peter Kilborn, and Jennifer Molinsky, also in attendance were Seth Zeren, Chief Zoning Code Official and staff to the ZRG, Alderman Lisle Baker, and Alderman Marcia Johnson.

For more information please contact Seth Zeren at 617-796-1145 or szeren@newtonma.gov.

Meeting Notes:

I. World of Zoning Presentation, by Newton Planning Department

- a. Changing drivers of land use
- b. Some failed assumptions
- c. Euclidean Zoning
- d. Negotiated Zoning
- e. Performance Zoning
- f. Form-based Zoning
- g. Incentive Zoning
- h. Hybrid approaches, e.g. Hamden, CT

II. Discussion of Zoning Reform Strategies and Goals

- a. Consideration of readings and resources
- b. How far to reform zoning?
 - i. Commercial areas only
 - ii. Residential areas as well
 - iii. Focuses areas (Needham St, etc.), laboratories
 - iv. Institutional uses (Dover protections)
- c. Focus on commercial areas for change

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- i. Village centers
 - ii. Commercial corridors (Needham Street)
- d. Are more zoning districts required?
 - i. To allow more neighborhood specificity in zoning
 - ii. New zones?
 - iii. Overlays?
- e. How far to go in “recreating the historical building pattern”
 - i. Understanding changing real-estate and land use drivers
 - ii. May not be able to “go back”
- f. Uses matter, form is not enough
 - i. Interest in the idea of allowing certain uses on certain floors and not others
- g. Mixing residential with commercial can “repopulate the village centers” and increase foot traffic (retail viability)
- h. Parking – overwhelms many other controls of density/use
- i. We can use incentives to encourage affordable housing (but increases density)
- j. Preference for forward thinking vs. restrictive thinking (show them what you want, not just what you don’t want)
- k. There is a need for predictability of process and predictability in the outcome
 - i. Important for neighbors, developers and the City
 - ii. Community has defined input, important, but cannot dominate process
 - iii. Developers and City can make informed predictions and decisions
 - iv. Need to consider the conditional permit process
- l. Zoning changes can also look forward toward environmental issues such as climate change
 - i. Mitigation vs. Adaptation

III. Introducing the Diagnostic Matrix

- a. A table that links “Principles” and “Goals” for the Zoning Ordinance as a way to organize discussion and collect a catalogue of desired changes to the ordinance

IV. Division of the Committee into three working subcommittees

- a. Residential/Housing
- b. Commercial/Economic Development
- c. Open Space/Institutional



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- d. Work on their own, report back at next meeting
- e. Consider chapters that relate to development other than Chapter 30, Zoning

V. Other issues that were raised

- a. Recognition of a need to consider our approach to nonconformities
- b. Recognition of a need to consider the effect of tax categories on business development
- c. Need for neighborhood/area master plans

VI. ZRG Process Discussion

- a. Next meeting scheduled for June 27, 5:30-7:30 pm, Room 202
- b. The "reform process"
 - i. Planning for public involvement (public meetings)
 - ii. Need to create political will
 - iii. Need for investment in resources (dedicated staff time, consultants, etc.)
 - iv. RFP Crafting